

A  
VINDICATION  
OF THE  
HONOR OF GOD,  
AND OF THE  
RIGHTS OF MEN.

*In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. De Coetlogon,*

OCCASIONED

By the publication of *Mr. Edwards's Sermon,*  
on the Eternity of Hell Torments.

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By *GEORGE CLARK.*

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—Must the knowledge of our *Forefathers*, be the precise measure of ours? — What if they had known but one half of what they did know, must we never have known more? What if they were under strong prejudices of Education, and would not examine; What if they so revered the Opinions of other good and learned Men, or imagined these points to be of so sacred a Nature, that they durst not examine; Or, what if they fancied them so much above all human Comprehension that it was their duty not to examine? Or of such Weight and Importance, that it was impious to examine? Whatever their foibles, or whatever their fetters were, what is that to us? Are we not bound to follow CHRIST, and to call him alone MASTER? *Taylor.*

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THE BEST OF MEN

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TO THE  
REV. Mr. De COETLOGON.

REV. SIR.

I must appeal to your candor for pardon of the liberty I am about to take, in commenting upon a discourse of Mr. Edwards's, lately published by you upon the *Eternity of Hell Torments*.

— I have no doubt Sir, but that Mr. Edwards had a very laudable object in view when he composed that discourse, and that your motives are equally pure in now publishing it. And I am the more ready to be of this opinion, when I consider, that it is next to impossible any Man should utter the awful language of this sermon, unless he really conceived, that no sacrifices were too great for the conversion of mankind: and that it were better to blacken the righteous Character of the ever blessed God, than to leave Men unconverted for want of a due share of infernal prospects. How far this Zeal is according to Knowledge, I leave you to judge.

I am persuaded however, that you would not have done thus, had you been aware, that the goodness of God, is as worthy to be defended, and as valuable to Man as the Justice of God. Have you never yet been taught, that God is not a Tyrant? Have you never yet discovered, that altho' God takes



( + )  
takes vengeance, yet he is not *revengeful*, that he punishes the delinquent without *oppression*, without *cruelty*? Do you not know that God is equally uninfluenced by *rage* and by *malice*? Is not revenge the pleasure of a weak Mind?

—— *Infirmi est animi exiguique voluptas*

*Ultio* ——

You will perhaps fear, that this sort of reasoning will operate against the propriety of any punishment at all — You may abate your fears. It is neither revengeful, malicious, or cruel, to give to every one his due — and did you never hear that there is no proportion between a *transient* and *temporary* ACT, and an *eternal* PUNISHMENT? That if a Man injures or interrupts the happiness of others, it is just that he should suffer an *EQUIVALENT* pain? That if a man abuses his nature in unlawful pleasures he should sustain a *proportionable* anguish? Is not the infliction of misery God's strange work, and does he not deal it out in such form only, as is necessary to secure the honor of his Laws, and to prevent the malignant evil of Sin? And how, I pray you can the honor of God's Laws be secured, where the miserable culprit is for *ever* offending, for *ever* violating the Law, and upbraiding and insulting the great legislator? Is this the way too to check  
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the malignant evil of rebellion? Is it a mode befitting infinite wisdom, and supreme goodness to keep rebels *alive for ever* in rebellion, in order to secure the honor of his Laws, and to stem the evil of disobedience? Or rather Sir, would not the honor of God's laws be more abundantly secured, and the evil more effectually abolished by cutting off the aggressor? Would not the ends of a good government such as God's is, be more amply obtained by taking from the sinner that *protection*, which he has wilfully and rebelliously forfeited? Would it not be more consistent with our ideas of wisdom, as well as of goodness and justice, that God should punish sinners with *everlasting DESTRUCTION*, according to the Scriptures, than that he should precipitate them into *eternal PAINS* according to the Alcoran?

Let me ask you further, Did you never suspect that the phrase the *infinite evil of Sin* is vague, uncertain, and unscriptural? Did you never suspect that they are high sounding words, without any meaning? Is it not possible that words and sentences should be put together, which can convey no ideas? Is not this the case here? Will you shew the world what you mean by an *infinite evil*? Will you tell them that that which is infinite has no bounds, and that man does an *act* which has no bounds,

— Or that the *evil* of the *act* has no bounds? And then tell them what you mean by there being no *bounds* to this *evil*. If you find on examination that the Scriptures are silent, and that common sense will not befriend you, act like a Minister of the TRUTH, and give this point up.

This done, I would go on to question you, what you mean by an *infinite obligation*? You say “ If the obligation to love honor and obey God, be infinite, then Sin is a violation of infinite obligation ” — But what my friend do you mean by an obligation without bounds, or limits, or end? Put your answer I pray you into such words, as shall clearly shew how and what this is? Tell us also if there are any degrees in infinity? And if there are not, and all things which are infinite, are *equally* so, then tell us, whether all sins and all sorts of sins, are not equally violations of infinite obligation, and consequently without exception equal? If in answering this question, you shall be obliged to go back to enquire into the *nature* of the crime, and the *situation* of the offender, in order to ascertain the degree of guilt, will it not be found that man being a *finite* creature cannot do an *infinite Act*? Will not such an enquiry spoil this favored position, and shew, that the *degree* of Guilt must be found in the malignancy of  
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of the Sinner, and in the turpitude of his Crimes: that the degree of the punishment must be proportioned to the mischief of the *Act committed*, and that nothing more is wanting to satisfy the utmost demands of Justice? And will it not follow from these premises, that infinite obligations, infinite evils, and infinite punishments, are the children of enthusiasm, airy phantoms dancing before distempered imaginations?

The learned Dr. Hammond, † Archbishop Tillotson and Si. William Dawes, when severally writing in defence of Hell Torments, reckon on these arguments drawn from the infinity of God, *niceties, unsatisfactory, inconclusive, and indefensible*: and the learned Ray when also defending this subject, confesses, that it is not penetrable to our dim sighted reason; how the justice of God, can consist with the eternal damnation of the Wicked — This you see reduces the question to the standard of Scripture.

Now Sir, if in defiance of common sense, you will still cry out for the *infinity* of evils and the *infinity* of punishment, of which the *Scriptures* speak *not ONE WORD*, and which *common sense* REVOLTS at — We shall then be

† Hamm. 130. see also his Pract. Catech. lib. 5, § 4. Sr. W. Dawes, serm. 4, p. 7. Ray on the dissolution 231.



obliged to attack you on this other ground, and see what we are to understand by *infinite* punishments? What is a punishment without bounds? You will perhaps get rid of this troublesome question, by saying, that Man as a *finite* being cannot sustain, or be the subject of that which is *infinite*, in the largest sense of that word, as that which has neither *bounds* nor *limits*; but you will say, that by an *infinite* punishment, you mean an *eternal* punishment. Be it so. Then I ask you wherein appears the necessity that the *torture* and *misery* of the damned, shall have no end? You will say because they never can pay the debt. But tell me my good Sir, which of the divine perfections is most magnified by this procedure: the divine *Goodness*, which must be constantly opposed by it, the divine *Wisdom*, which must be constantly *insulted* by it, or the divine *Justice*, which must be constantly *provoked* by it? Divine goodness, wisdom, and justice, unite in condemning it, they all unite in consigning the *sinner* and his *sins* to perpetual *desolation*—they abhor that *misery* and *sin* should perpetually pursue him: because then indeed most truly, ignorance and spleen would usurp the seat of Wisdom and Goodness, and Justice would bow at the shrine of insult and shame!

You

You may have observed Sir, from what has just now been said, that if a punishment *without an end*, were necessary for the satisfaction of divine Justice, we have one already provided to our hands—the Scriptures are full of it, we are there taught most explicitly, that the punishment of the Wicked is *death, destruction, corruption, perdition, and that for ever*. What more Sir, would you have to make an *infinite* punishment, if an *infinite*, or which you say is the same thing, an *endless* punishment must be had? Do you not see, that this scheme, this scriptural and heaven-born scheme, answers all your demands? We will now Sir give you leave to prove, with all the aids of sophistry, that sin is an infinite evil, that the punishment must therefore be infinite; that it must be eternal, because it is *infinite*; that it must be *eternal*, because the debt *can never be discharged*: you may now prove, that wicked men shall not be delivered till they have paid the utmost farthing, that this utmost farthing never can be paid, that hereby all mercy is excluded, and they must be eternally damned: and all this will fall into the profound and godlike doctrine of the Scripture, which declares that the wicked shall be *punished, with everlasting DESTRUCTION*,

You will now very gravely tell me, that annihilation is an instantaneous Act, and therefore

fore no proper punishment, there being in it no suffering of pain? I answer, that the Scriptures say nothing about annihilation, nor have I done so: the Act of *destroying by fire*, which is the true Scripture doctrine of future punishment, may be so diversified: so sudden or protracted, so enlarged or lessened, in it's attendant MISERY, as that it may in the display of divine Justice, be suited to all *degrees of EVIL*, and all *descriptions of SINNERS*.

But you still see an obstacle in this view of the punishment of the wicked, in those declarations of Scripture, which represent the PUNISHMENT of the WICKED as *eternal* — You will charge it with wanting the properties of eternal punishment. — You will ask how that can be a *punishment*, which gives no *pain*? You will contend that when it ceases to give pain, it ceases to be a punishment, and that it ceases to give pain when the object is destroyed. — I must beg leave to differ from you on this head also — The idea of misery, anguish, and despair, has been so linked to the idea of *punishments* that I know it is not easy to conceive of a punishment, without also conceiving, that it is attended with *pain* — but how does the fact stand; we have nothing to do with vulgar prejudices, we are seeking after the TRUTH and by the Truth  
let



let us be determined. The fact then is that the New Testament knows no other punishment of sin, but *destruction by fire*. The Scriptures constantly declare that *eternal life, incorruption, immortality, non-subjection to death*, is the peculiar franchise, and blessedness, of the penitent and obedient — the Scriptures as constantly declare that *death, the second death, corruption, perdition, destruction*, a denial of *eternal LIFE*, is the irreversible fate of the disobedient: — thus the fact stands upon the sacred records † — to deny it, is to deny one of the plainest doctrines there recorded.

If then the doctrine of Scripture is, that the wicked shall be subjected to everlasting destruction, this everlasting *destruction*, must be that everlasting *punishment*, of which the Scriptures also speak. And I contend that this is properly an everlasting PUNISHMENT. — Punishment in it's true Scriptural sense is *the execution of the Sentence of the Law*, be that sentence

† These facts the Author intends to prove to demonstration in a larger work, which is nearly ready for the press, and which will have the following Title "A Vindication of the honor of God in a Scriptural refutation of the Doctrine of Eternal Torment, wherein it will appear that there is a true Medium between the Doctrine of eternal Torment and universal Salvation "

what

what it may. so long therefore as the delinquent remains under the execution of that sentence, and undelivered from it, so long he remains in a state of *punishment*, and if he is never delivered from it, his punishment must be *eternal*.

And thus Sir, it is in the present case — the the curse, or sentence of the Law against offenders, is *destruction* — this then is the proper *punishment* of the divine Law — and if the offenders are never restored to life, if they remain for ever in this state of destruction — for ever under the execution of this sentence of the Law, so long they remain not delivered from the punishment, and if they are never delivered, their *punishment* is truly and properly *eternal*.

Your Author in his fourth page, takes some pains to prove, that infinite and supreme benevolence can see the creatures of it's own will tossed in tormenting flames, without respite, and without end: unmoved, unaffected. Gracious God, what a labour! How retrograde is this to infinite goodness, how degrading to the human understanding — and all this forsooth, lest it should be called or be deemed, "*a passion!*" And yet this very man, makes the *Justice* of God, and the *Hatred* of God, passions in a much greater degree. — Does he not? Is it less a  
passion

passion which moves God according to his account, to *hate* Sin infinitely, to *vindicate his injured Majesty*, and to *glorify his Justice*, in the eternal misery and anguish of his Creatures, than it would be to avoid inflicting that eternal misery and anguish, because it is inconsistent with that clemency, which benevolence demands, even in the midst of Judgment: and which serves to distinguish between the cruel tyrant, and the benign Judge. Is it impossible Sir, that the ever blessed God should disapprove of the eternal torment of his creatures, without meanness and absurdity, as your author supposes? — Is it impossible that God should be *kind*, without being *ridiculous*? He says the mercy of God, is free and Sovereign - that the exercises of it are not necessary - that it is not of such a nature, that God cannot help but deliver Sinners from misery. It is very probable, that this is a true state of the case, and I think it would solve a great many theological difficulties, if he would treat the divine Justice with as much liberality. Take this I pray you as a specimen of a similar idea of divine Justice. Divine Justice is a branch of the divine goodness, and consists in giving to every one his due — but God is not obliged to punish every one to the utmost extent of his crimes - if this were the case, none would escape the punishments of a future state. Divine Justice imports  
the



the *right* to punish for crimes; but carries with it no absolute *necessity*. Justice requires, that all the good any one deserves, should be imparted to him; but does not imply a necessity to punish for offences committed — that is, it is no failure of Justice, for any being to avoid exacting the whole penalty of offenders against him, for then there would be no possible room for mercy. I must give to every one all that I owe him, but I need not take from every one all that is owing to me. Justice requires me to pay my debts, but does not prevent me from forgiving my debtor. — Carry these observations my friend into your closet, and by them examine the principles you imbibed when young, and which are now assimilated into your constitution: examine I say impartially, and you will perhaps see reason to adopt a system of divinity, somewhat more rational, and less dishonorable to God.

What he says, p. 5. that *all* misery in the creature is contrary to God's nature, if *extreme* misery is, is nugatory — so far as misery is necessary to support the authority and sanctity of the divine government, so far will the divine being inflict it, this no one denies: but does it follow Sir, because it is contrary to God's benevolent nature and designs, to punish his creatures.

tures with the greatest *possible* torments, and without respite or end, that therefore God cannot inflict misery at all. Do not you see that this reasoning of your authors is exceedingly impertinent? Reverse the argument I beseech you - use the same language of the divine Justice, and you will discover that God cannot forgive any at all!—you have nothing to do but to go on (from the idea that God *must* punish either the offender or his surety,) to add a little to the divine Justice, and you will soon discover by the same sort of reasoning, that God will in the end be obliged to *punish* all, in as much all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

Page 6, and 7. are taken up to prove, that there is a great evil in sin, which in fact requires no proof: and to shew that if we could but *conceive*, how our sins deserved eternal misery, we should think it *not unreasonable*, that they should receive the punishment they deserve. A curious piece of information truly — It is just as tho' he had told us, that if one and one make two, then the number two is composed of one and one. He complains of the infidelity of men, as to the desert of sin — and glad I am to hear it — Indeed how is it possible men should believe the account he has given, till they have given up all ideas of the goodness and love of God, till they have given up  
their

their own understanding, and have suffered themselves to be led by Councils, by Synods, and by Priests.

In p. 8. he goes on to shew, that it is suitable, decent, and proper, that sinners should be tormented eternally: and this he proves by shewing, that it is proper that God should *hate* sin *infinitely*. This fondness for *infinities* obscures the subject greatly — it is the *salvo* of all your difficulties — the *causa sine qua non* of all your ideas on the subject — and when you have made the most of it, it is for the purpose in question, lighter than Air! — Admit that God *hates* sin *infinitely*, and that this infinite hatred is suitable to be expressed by him: then I ask, can he shew his infinite detestation, in any way so suitable as by putting *an end* to so hateful a thing, and by *exterminating* the hated subject of it? Can you shew that utter destruction of the sinner, is not an expression of infinite hatred? Cannot you see Sir, that in order to execute an infinite punishment, the fruit of this infinite hatred, it is by no means *necessary* that the hated object should be preserved in eternal existence, for the mere purpose of enduring torment? Do you not see how unsuitable this is to Wisdom and to Goodness? Do you not see that this makes the deity cruel, unpitiful, revengeful? Do you not see that this conduct is more suitable



to the character of the Prince of Darkneſs, than to him whoſe name is LOVE, and whoſe tender mercies are over all his Works? Shew me that there *was no poſſible way*, in which God could expreſs his infinite hatred, but in *eternal torture*, and then I will believe that this is the puniſhment which the wicked ſhall endure — but let your proof have the light of the meridian Sun; for while I can *poſſibly* believe that God is GOOD, I ſhall be unwilling to believe that this is *true*.

Page 9, 10, 11, prove what is as ſuitable to the doctrine I contend for, as it is to the doctrine of eternal miſery. The diſpute is not now you ſee, whether there is ſuch a thing as *eternal miſery*. Nor is the diſpute, whether the wicked are to be *annihilated*, but whether they are to be *deſtroyed*.

The general tenor of this Authors arguments to prove the abſolute *eternity* of the ſtate deſcribed in the Scriptures by words indicative of *eternity*, I heartily concur with him in, as I do in what he has ſaid as to the certainty that God will execute his threatenings; but I do very much abhor the account he gives us that “the torments of the damned will *glorify God’s Juſtice*” and “that the ſight of hell torments will *exalt the happineſs of Saints*” This gives one a moſt degrading idea of the divine *perfections, and of future happineſs*. It fills my mind with  
horror

horror and amazement — It may appear to you to be a part of the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ — it appears to me to be the most frightful blasphemy, the most detestable impiety: One who was less reserved than even your author, shall speak out upon this subject, and if you do not tremble at the relation, I shall fear that your habits of thinking have wrought too effectually upon you to efface that charity, that universal benevolence, and love, which it was one great end of the gospel dispensation to secure: and which I am persuaded forms the most conspicuous character of the happiness of the future world — the words alluded to are those of *Mr. Reynolds*, in his *Inquiry into the state and œconomy of the Angelical World*, p. 303. speaking of the great, the glorious and the beneficent God, he says “so high  
“and great, so incomprehensibly supreme is he,  
“that ten thousand times ten thousand most  
“miserably tormented spirits shall not in the  
“least be pitied, or regarded by him to all  
“eternity. Ten thousand times ten thousand  
“most doleful sighs, and shrieks, and groans,  
“and yellings, and roarings, and howlings,  
“under the most exquisite tortures and anguish of spirit, shall not meet with the  
“least pity or compassion, to all eternity.  
“Oh the the dignity of that being, who has an  
“everlasting Hell to be the representation or  
“triumph of his grandeur! There he rides in  
magni-

“ magnificent, tho’ gloomy state, and marches  
 “ over a world of damned Heads, with the most  
 “ uncommiserating disregard and disdain.”

Does not your heart recoil? Are you not filled with indignation? Can you read this blasphemy without a shudder? Yet this is the undisguised import of your publication — May that blessed God, whose name you so miserably traduce, grant you forgiveness. May that kindness, which first dictated the gospel of God’s Grace, make you sensible how much the doctrine of eternal torment and misery, blackens and dishonors the character of God — It is my earnest hope that you may see the plain, simple, and uncorrupted Truth of the Gospel.

It is not within the design of this Letter thoroughly to examine the passages your author has produced to prove, that because men shall suffer exquisite torment in their future punishment, that therefore the torment must of necessity be eternal - this is reserved for the larger work I have before hinted at, which is ready for the press, and wherein it will most evidently appear, that your author is mistaken in his applications. It will therein appear that in the execution of the divine sentence, *i. e.* in the *destruction of the wicked by fire*, there will be *weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth*, and that these expressions by no means prove, or carry



carry the appearance of proving, that *that* weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, shall be **ETERNAL**. I cannot help however observing the great power of truth, - how does it force itself upon the mind of your author himself p. 13. where he says, that "the punishment of the wicked which is called the *second death*, is doubtless so, called in reference to the death of the body: and as the *death* of the body is *ordinarily attended with great pain and distress*, so the like, or something vastly greater, is implied in calling the eternal punishment of the wicked, th: *second death*." How aptly does he here so've to your hand, all the supposed difficulties of such declarations, as that we have just been considering — And how fairly might we argue that as the first death is ordinarily attended with great pain and distress, so weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, will attend that second death, that *everlasting destruction* which is the ultimate execution of the sentence of God's Law.

Compare my good Sir, the passage quoted from Rev. 20. v. 10. with the 11th verse of the 14th chapter of that book, and both of them with Isaiah 34. v. 9, 10, 11. and you will probably see, that by the lofty and prophetic language there used, is not intended, what is literally expressed — perhaps also upon a minute investigation, you will find that *men* are

are not at all spoken of, in that passage Rev. 20. v. 10. and perhaps you will join with me in censuring your author, for having so dexterously used this passage in his 12th page, as a proof that wicked *men* shall be eternally tormented, and in the 14th page as a proof that the *Devil* shall be so tormented, in contradistinction to men. Is this christian candor? Is this the conduct which a love of the TRUTH inspires? Let me intreat you not to be alarmed if in this same 20th chap. of the Revelations, you should also discover, that in the conclusion of the dreadful *scenes of the last day*, DEATH and HELL [the GRAVE,] shall be cast into the Lake of FIRE. But let me beg of you to consider, whether this is in order that death and the grave may be *tormented*, or that they may be *destroyed*, according to the prediction, "O Death I will be thy DESTRUCTION" and according to 1. Cor. 15. v. 26. "the *last* enemy that shall be DESTROYED is *death*." And so LIFE shall reign for ever.

Do the Scriptures ever declare that the finally impenitent shall be *immortal, incorruptible*? Does not the original curse shew that DEATH should be the wages of sin? † Does not the same curse shew that by *death* was intended a resolution of the constituent parts, a return to the pristine dust?

† Gen. 3. v. 4, 19. Rom, 6. v. 23.

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The phrases also of an *undying worm*, and *unquenchable fire* may deserve a little of your attention - probably if you will throw off the learning of schools, you may think with Hammond, that these two phrases refer to the two different methods of disposing of the DEAD among the Jews by *burying* and *burning*: and then they will point out *destruction, perdition*, — the worm *not dying* and the fire *not being quenched*, will then signify that they produce utter, irretrievable *perdition*: and for your assistance herein let me recommend you to 2. Kings 22. v. 17. Isa. 1. v. 31. ch. 47 v. 14. Jerem. 4. v. 4. ch. 7. v. 20. ch. 17, v. 27. and ch. 21. v. 12. Amos 5. v. 6. &c. where you will find, that the phrase *unquenchable fire*, does not mean that it shall burn for ever, but that it shall not be extinguished, till it has effected it's purposes of DESTRUCTION.

Is it not true Sir, that *prophecies*, or predictions of future events are full of *lofty metaphors* and *figurative expressions*? Are they not frequently hyperbolical? Was not the rhetorick of the eastern countries in the time of the new Testament writers, lofty and extravagant? Are not descriptions of the future state of the wicked, *prophetical* passages? And what hinders, that these descriptions should not be highly figurative, and metaphorical?

How



How afraid you are to believe that God will not *eternally torment*, but *utterly destroy* offending man — you consider that the bridle of eternal misery taken off, men will rush with unrestrainable eagerness into sin — alas Sir! you are mistaken. Is not the doctrine of eternal torment one of the parents of deism? Does not this doctrine contradict men's natural ideas of God as a good, a benevolent being? Do not nine tenths of professing Christians, doubt about it, or disbelieve it? Do not they proportionably disbelieve the Scriptures, upon the presumption that it is taught there? Do not such disbelievers fly to an implicit, an unfounded reliance upon divine mercy? And will such blind *notions* produce moral good? Will not such unscriptural notions produce a great deal of moral evil? You are to understand Sir, that when men doubt the truth of *eternal torments*, they directly leap to the opposite extreme, and depend solely on something they call divine mercy, not distinguishing the true doctrine of eternal *perdition*, which lies between them, and which if it were seen, would prove the happy medium, wherein men would be saved from blasphemy and slavish fears on the one hand, and from rash presumption and false hopes on the other.

It is a maxim of this same Author's (Mr. Edwards) in his *inquiry into the Freedom of the*

*the will, f. 2.* that the will is always determined by the *strongest* motive — now the ground of, or that which *moves to faith is evidence*, and that is most *evident* which is most *rational*; that which is most rational, will therefore be most firmly *believed*. Now as the view of future events, will more or less influence our present conduct, as those views are more *explicit* and *clear*, or more *implicit* and *obscure*, in order to determine which of these two doctrines would most influence our moral conduct, we need only inquire which of them is the most rational — and if the answer should perchance be, that the doctrine of *utter destruction* is most consistent with our ideas of Justice, of Wisdom, and of God. it will follow that the greatest moral good will be produced by reprobating the received opinion, and by teaching as the Scriptures do that the world is kept in *store, reserved* unto *fire* against the day of Judgement, and PERDITION of ungodly men. 2 Pet. 3. 7.

Once more, does not the doctrine of suitable equivalent punishments, give us honorable notions of God? Is not the destruction of sin and the sinner, the most effectual method to prevent evil? Is it not more probable that God should remove these nuisances from his Creation, than that they should abide for ever? Is not such a notion rational and credible? And will

not

not the teaching this doctrine secure a firm assent to the Scriptures, honorable notions of God, and a consequent virtuous obedience?

Admit however that some professing Christians do believe the doctrine of *eternal torments*, and stedfastly so. Then let me ask, do not hard and unworthy notions of the deity, check virtuous endeavors? Do not gloomy ideas of God rather influence the *fear and hatred*, than the *love* of God? And which of these two principles is most likely to produce acceptable obedience? Why Sir, the fact is that teaching eternal torment as a part of the glorious gospel of God, is one of the most effectual means of overturning the great design of that gospel, that is, the making men VIRTUOUS and HAPPY.

If Sir I have taken any liberties which may appear to you assuming or unwarrantable, they are not done with a view of offending you, but to rouse you to a sense of the importance of TRUTH, and to justify his character who is the loving Father of mankind — and my earnest hope and prayer to God is, that you may come to the perfect knowledge of his truth, and to a consistent and honorable view of his justice and goodness.

G. CLARK.

5th. FEB. 1789.



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*Erratum, p. 17. l. 16. for misery r. punishment.*

